

Fika

by The Readers Muse

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## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** I don't own The 100. Everything belongs to whoever owns them, my wishful thinking aside.

**\*\*Authors Note #1:\*\*** likegalileodroppedtheorange on tumblr asked for: "Kabby prompt: Grounder!Marcus and scars" â€" Set in the same universe as my Grounder!Marcus fic: "Incalescent" but it isn't necessary to have read that previously to understand the premise of this fic.

**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** description of injury, blood, canon appropriate language, scars and violence.

**\*\*Fika\*\***

**\_\*\*Chapter One\*\*\_**

The second time she met Marcus Kane kom Trikru was when she was escorted into the grounder village for their meeting and came face to face with the man himself sitting cross-legged on a pile of furs in his command tent. Shirtless and eyes closed with his hands in a meditative pose as the healer attending him chose that exact moment to remove the arrow that had been sticking out of his back.

"Jesus Christ!" she exclaimed, stepping forward immediately â€" instinctively â€" only to come up short when his guards lurched in from the sidelines. Hands on the hilts of their swords as her own guard tensed behind her. Reminding her rather suddenly of her situation before Marcus murmured a quiet negative, the muscles in his back tense and trembling as the healer applied pressure to the wound.

She barely noticed the guards stepping back. Attention firmly caught as Marcus indicated for her to approach. Gesturing to the low-lying bench lined with soft sheep-skin which had been set opposite him before bidding one of the young men by the entrance to bring tea and bread.

"Chancellor Griffin," Marcus greeted, taking her in with a serious smile, giving no indication he was in any discomfort whatsoever as he carried on like the disturbance had never happened. Posture straight despite the still-bleeding wound as he inclined his head. Surprising her by extending his hand for her to take, shaking it loosely, like he was afraid of breaking her. "I believe this is the proper greeting for your people, is it not?"

"It is, thank you," she affirmed, caught more than a bit off guard before rallying herself to stick with the point she'd opened with. "What happened?"

It hadn't been long after their first meeting in Arkadia. Not long enough to build even the ghost of trust or even familiarity, but she couldn't help but ask. Watching the older woman who was mashing a bundle of pungent herbs into a small wooden bowl. Eying the sprigs of herbs that dotted the floor around her doubtfully as she mentally rooted through the supplies she'd brought with her. Deciding that at the very least she could get him stitched up and bandaged while she was here.

"Nothing serious," he replied dismissively, smile angling amusedly to port as the healer muttered something disparaging under her breath. Looking supremely unimpressed as her pile of long silver-grey hair - braided thick on either side and coiled up in a large, elegant looking knot on the top of her head - bobbed dangerously as she shook her head. "There were reports of a large group - those banished from their clan for whatever reason - was moving through the area. I proved them correct. After a fashion."

"I can see that," she returned dryly, raising a brow before deciding to cut right to the chase. Sparing a moment to look down at the glinting arrowhead leaking red across the woven mat before raising her eyes to find his already fixed on her. "I'd like to take a look at it, if you don't mind."

For a tense moment, no one spoke.

"You?" he repeated, curious but with a hint of something she couldn't quite put a name to as the guards on either side of the door exchanged dark glances. The healer, however, just looked mildly insulted. Smacking her hands on her hips as she rose to her full height behind him. Clearly ready to give her a piece of her mind. And honestly, she couldn't blame her. It was a bit too much like looking in the mirror if she was in the woman's shoes. It wasn't just professional pride. It was loyalty. But she was trying to building something here, something based on trust, friendship and understanding and the truth was, they'd been yards behind the mark every time they encountered Marcus' people.

\_It was time they showed their worth.\_

"I am a doctor before a Chancellor," she explained, keeping her eyes

on him and him alone. Refusing to get drawn into a battle of wounded pride with the woman as the gauze-like cloth she'd applied to the wound slowly stained itself red.

But since Marcus' face was still open and considering, she pushed forward, hands clasped in her lap.

"When I was young, one of the first lessons I can remember being taught in a group was about working together," she started, unsure of where exactly she was going with this until the moment clicked and suddenly the words were an earnest, disjointed jumble in her mouth.

"You recall our technology? The view screens, data pads?" she asked, waiting until the man nodded before pushing on. "Well, we can watch things on them, recordings from before all this. I remember one day our teacher took us into one of the service bays and showed us this exercise. It was called a Trust Fall. A trust building exercise where you allowed yourself to fall, trusting that your partner or the entire group would catch you before you hit the ground. The lesson was, that if you work together. For each other. Even if you fall, there will always be someone there to catch you. But there was another side. In order for that working together to happen, you had to let yourself fall. \_Let yourself trust\_."

Marcus' eyes were piercing.

"I mean no disrespect," she explained, turning her attention to the healer this time as she pulled her first aid kit out of her pack and set it on the ground in front of her. Opening the Velcro with a hissing-slash of noise to reveal its contents. "But this is why I am here. We each have our own ways. Allow me to show you mine?"

Somewhere outside, the sound of duelling blades slanted the atmosphere towards the sharp of a knife's edge. Adding a tint of violence to a moment that was already drowning in tension before the man took a deep breath and firmed the line of his shoulders. Clearly trying to ease the pain of the wound as a line of crimson seeped freely down the dip of his spine. She clasped her hands tighter in her lap on reflex. Managing to resist temptation, but only barely.

"Is that what I am to you?" he asked after a long moment, thoughtful and quiet as the beaten copper strands woven into his braids reflected the light streaming in from outside. "What\_ we\_ are to you and your people? Partners?"

"Allies," she affirmed, smiling small despite him not returning the same. Keeping herself above needing it as she laid out her cards bare faced and bold. Understanding the diplomatic matters that were at stake here. She couldn't back down. She couldn't fold. One misstep and it would negate all their progress trying to establish a foothold here. A peace with the grounders. "And hopefully, someday soon, friends. If we're going to build something here, we need to start trusting one another. What better way to start?"

He stared at her for a long time. Like if he waited long enough any deception she was holding back would tease itself free. Eventually however, he inclined his head. Dismissing his guards before turning

to the healer with a smile that was fractionally warmer. Something that spoke of familiarity and fondness and that did something to his face that made her itch to put a smile like that there herself someday.

"You honor me with your service. You may go."

The woman pursed her lips, but nodded respectfully. Preceding her own guards through the canvas flaps as she gestured for them to follow. Leaving her and Marcus alone in the tent for the first time.

She was about to say something, to move forward and stem the bleeding before he stopped her.

It was such a small gesture, the curl of his fingers stretching out to keep the space between them.

But it was enough to have her sinking back into the furs "wary and on edge."

"Your words are wise and thoughtful, and while I agree with their meaning, they do not hide what is in here," he murmured, pressing his fist into his chest before letting it fall away almost dismissively. Like an emperor of old allowing a fight in his arena to carry on unchallenged despite the very air around him charged with his own authority.

"You mean well, but you think your ways are best," he clarified, seizing her hesitation as she rode the thin line between shame and sincerity. Because he wasn't wrong. She had her biases. But at the end of the day, she only wanted good to come from them. "No disrespect meant, Chancellor Griffin, but for my people, assuming your ways are the best is not the wisest way to make friends."

She lowered her eyes before nodding.

Accepting the warning for what it was.

A quiet admonishment of truth meant not to wound, but to educate.

And despite the sting to her pride, she couldn't help but respect him all the more for it.

\* \* \*

><p><span><strong>AN:\*\* Thank you for reading, please let me know what you think. " There will be one more chapter, so stay tuned.

\*\*Reference:\*\*

- The title, "fika" is a rare Swedish word meaning: "a coffee break between friends or colleagues."

## 2. Chapter 2

\*\*Disclaimer:\*\* I don't own The Walking Dead. Everything belongs to whoever owns them, my wishful thinking aside.

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**\*\*Warnings:\*\*** description of injury, blood, canon appropriate language, scars and violence.

**\*\*Fika\*\***

**\_\*\*Chapter Two\*\*\_**

The wound was simple enough.

In truth, the hard work was mostly done.

All she had to do was clean and stitch it up.

He was lucky it hadn't gone any deeper.

It must have deflected off something before piercing the skin.

But it was the scars that criss-crossed down his back that made her pause.

She examined them as she held a bundle of sterile gauze to the wound. Noting they seemed to be separated into two categories. The plain ones she recognized immediately, a kill count. Marks that signified lives taken in combat. She blinked, fingers flexing as she resisted the urge to run her hand down the span of pebbling scars.

There were three neat rows, six per line.

\_Eighteen deaths.\_

\_Eighteen lives.\_

But it was the grouping on the other side, raised like pustules and tattooed red that made her pause. They were set aside from the other marks in almost every respect. Notably different in some way she was not privy to as she watched them move in time with his breathing. They were small and grouped together in a circle, spiraling out from the jut of his shoulder, halfway down the curve of his spine before stopping. She lost count at a hundred and forty.

She bit down on the inside of her cheek until she tasted her own red. Wanting to comment. To know. Perhaps even to cast judgement as she wiped the wound clean and inspected the edges. Using her scissors to cut the line of thread she'd need as he remained silent and stone-steady in front of her. Breathing slow and measured like this entire situation wasn't the least bit uncomfortable, whereas she was hanging onto her tongue by a breath. Trying to find a comfortable medium of understanding between their two cultures as his words from before rang through her head.

"\_No disrespect meant, Chancellor Griffin, but for my people, assuming your ways are the best is not the wisest way to make friends."\_

Maybe it was his endless serenity and poise that grated on her, or maybe it was just a forgone conclusion that she was going to ignore her better judgement, but as she sterilized the needle she couldn't help but bring them up. Wanting answers. Wanting to know how a man who'd killed so many was the one their Commander had chosen to help bring their people into the Alliance.

\_To forge peace.\_

"I've treated warriors half your age with double the amount of these particular marks," she remarked coolly. Watching the muscles in his back flare with an exaggerated exhale, like she caught him off guard. "I was told you were a great warrior," she finished, leaving the most important part unsaid. Feeling justified in some childish way she didn't quite understand as her pulse throbbed uncomfortably fast under her skin.

He didn't turn to face her.

He didn't speak.

In fact, for a long moment there was nothing.

Still, she didn't take the words back.

They were still in the process of navigating where they stood with each other and she saw no need to reign herself in when it came to the man that a child - a young woman barely older than her own daughter - had seen fit to send. She could find a hundred and one convenient excuses for the words and she was determined to cling to them all. Ignoring the small like voice in her breast that reminded her of the fluttering in her belly the first time they'd met.

"It is true," he remarked eventually, crisp and austere as he stayed with his back to her. "I am well grown, yet have far less to boast of than others. But then, I'm more interested in saving lives than taking them, when I can. Is that something you and I will have in common, Chancellor Griffin?"

Behind his back her eyebrow rose, grudgingly impressed by the return.

\_The worst part was that she had a feeling she was going to hate to love him already.\_

\* \* \*

><p>"Will you need to be sedated?" she asked after a moment, ready to get started. Making sure everything was arranged around her for when she needed it as she unscrewed the cap on the small bottle of antiseptic. Readily anticipating that his answer would be negative.<p>

He cocked his head. Craning his neck so that he could look back at her for a handful of beats. Clearly not understanding.

"Something for the pain?" she clarified, holding up her suture and thread as his expression cleared and he gestured at an earthen cup on the stool beside him.

"Ah, no," he replied, shaking his head. "There is something my people take to numb the wound. Our healer already administered the tea before you arrived. It is- unpleasant, but very effective."

She chuffed a laugh, believing it. Oral painkillers had a tendency to be very bitter. She eyed the cup speculatively. Picturing an herbal mixture " something with willow bark, boswellia and ginseng perhaps. All of which would certainly get the job done. The only real question was the dosage. And that was easy enough to test.

"Good, because otherwise this will sting," she added lightly, dousing the wound with a good portion of the bottle before waiting for a reaction. But apparently the healer's remedy was as good as her word because save for a subtle rippling of flesh, more from the impact than anything, there was no reaction from him whatsoever.

Or at least not until the man inhaled and promptly choked.

"Jesus! Chit ste bilaik!? Disha ste supposed kom heal?!" he exclaimed, ducking his head and grabbing his nose. Huffing like a disgruntled horse as the acrid tang of the chemical saturated the air between them.

"Antiseptic," she replied, getting the just of it as he eyed the bottle like it might be combustible. Unable to keep the smile from her face as he slowly settled himself back down in the furs, nose twitching. "It makes sure the wound doesn't get infected."

The rest of the moment was a learning experience that teetered on the side of curious intimacy when she smoothed her hand down the plane of his back. Steadying herself as she hooked the first suture and pulled the thread taut. Only subconsciously aware that eventually her breathing slowed down to mirror his. Working together in the most basic level there was as the air hung humid and heavy around them.

\* \* \*

><p>It wasn't until she was halfway through her stitching that she allowed herself to ask.<p>

"What do these other ones signify?" she murmured, tone whisper-low as her gloved-hand ghosted across the span of the raised reds. Respectful this time as he stiffened underneath her for the first time since they'd started.

For a long moment, she wondered if he was even going to answer, but then-

"They signify the deaths I am responsible for," he replied slowly, carefully. Tone brittle in a way she didn't quite recognize coming from his lips as she stilled in mid-stitch, frowning.

"I don't understand, I thought that these-" she paused, pointing towards the eighteen scars on the other side of his back. "Signified how many you've killed in battle?"

"They do," the man allowed, chin dipping into his chest momentarily " like he was paying homage to the truth of it - before straightening again. "But these marks represent lives I have taken in

a different way. As a leader, we are sometimes called on to make difficult choices. To hold the lives of the many above the few. As the leader of your people, you know this, yes?"

She nodded, hands flexing around the suture as the warm metal grew clammy and slick under her skin. Giving them a moment to breathe before she caved to the silent demand for more.

"Can I ask what happened?"

This time, when he turned to look at her, his smile was wry.

\_Haunted.\_

Adding a layer she hadn't expected as she waited for him to continue.

"Two years ago there was a sickness. Something our healers could not cure. It made the blood grow thick â€" leaking out of the body through the mouth, nose and ears â€" spreading bloody legions across the skin. Entire families were wiped out. It struck almost every house. And those that did not die, lingered in agony for many weeks. Begging for death," he explained, speaking slowly, like every word was being carefully chosen as she continued her stitches. Giving him the illusion of privacy as a clammy sweat broke out across his shoulders.

"When the sickness threatened to spread to Polis, I gave the order to cull the spread."

\_Cull the spread.\_

She didn't have to ask to know what he meant.

"They were sick, dying," she started, finding compassion in the debris of her scattered thoughts. Watching a singular rivulet of red seep down from the wound. Trickling down between the raised red dots like a metaphor before he shook his head â€" emphatic and almost angry.

"No, you don't understand," he returned flatly, the line of his back stiff and unyielding under her hands as she looked up. Staring at the back of his head like she was meeting his eyes rather than the loose waves of his hair. "In order to ensure it could not be passed on to the Capitol, everyone in the closest village was culled. I gave the order to lock them in their homes, sick and healthy alike, and set fire to their homes while they slept."

"I could have separated the healthy from the sick and waited. But I believed my way was right," he continued, tone heavy and almost dull in its bluntness as she forced herself to set the suture aside. Fingers shaking too much to continue as his words hit far too close to home for comfort.

"It was only after that I realized I'd been wrong. If I had waited, maybe-"

He shook his head.



"But that is my weight to carry, not yours."

She bit down on her lip. Remembering a remarkably similar choice that she had been about to make on the Ark before it fell out of the sky. About three hundred lives and the reality that unless they reduced their numbers, there wasn't going to be enough air for any of them.

"Believe it or not, you aren't as alone as you think," she started, deciding that one confidence deserved another as his body language shifted into something just shy of baited interest.

\* \* \*

><p>"Perhaps in this we are not so dissimilar after all," he remarked thoughtfully, once she'd finished. "Each of us have taught our children what they need to know to survive. Not out of madness or cruelty, but because it was what we ourselves were taught. And in turn, what the world taught us."<p>

She opened her mouth, automatically wanting to disagree. Wanting to say that they didn't teach their children to murder in order to survive. To pick up weapons before they came of age and go into battle with their parents when the need called for it.

But she couldn't.

\_Because he was right.\_

On the Ark they'd taught their children the same lessons, only in different ways.

"Perhaps," she replied eventually, forcing a smile she knew he saw right through as the admission turned bitter in her mouth. Feeling the weight of his eyes as she forced herself to see her experiences through his eyes. Knowing that somehow, he'd already accepted hers the same way.

\_They each had a lot to atone for.\_

\* \* \*

><p>She exhaled shakily into the feathers of his hair as she tied the last stitch and used a sterile cotton swab to carefully clean the edges of the wound. Breathing through the fallout as the silence of the tent weighed heavy and close. <em>Humid<em>. So unlike the stale cold of space that something in her still missed it in spite of it all that it threatened to make her weak the very moment she needed more than anything else to be strong. Strong for herself. Strong for her people.

Once out in the open, the guilt of that \_what if\_ was almost crippling. Because if it had come down to it, she would have. To save the many, she would have condemned the few. That was the burden of leadership. Making the impossible calls. That ones that stay with you for-

It was the soft of his hand on her wrist " gentle and warm " that brought her out of it. Overly conscious of the way the muscles tensed and flexed and he turned to face her. Showing her the similar state

of his chest, tanned skin and scars borne "earned" during a lifetime of struggle.

"The past is an animal," he told her quietly, emphatic and open, perhaps for the first time as they shared kinship "a shared experience" in that moment. Reminding her, if nothing else, that she wasn't alone. "Sometimes it is quiet and content. Other times, it rarely stops screaming. But in my experience, there is always a reason."

"If our children's-children are to look back on this moment as the start of a new beginning for our people, can we at least both agree to try for the former?" he hummed softly, dark eyes. "For a peace that is not blind, but knows it's past and the consequences of its actions so that it might never make the same mistakes?"

She nodded, breathing in the strange, but growingly familiar scent of him.

They owed their people to try, at the very least.

"We've both taught our children how to survive, not how to live," she answered slowly, swallowing hard. Seeing that perfect possibility start to take shape in her mind's eye. Letting herself believe it as his quiet insistence radiated outwards. Threatening to swallow her whole in the best and worst of ways. "But that isn't the way it has to be anymore. Not for either of our people. And our scars- the ones that have shaped us, the ones that still haunt us, they don't have to hold us. We can do better. Be better."

This time his smile was layered. Different. Almost making her believe that between the two of them they could see it happen as one of the guards swept into the tent behind them and set a tray of fragrant tea and coal-roasted flatbread beside him. Leaving her a towel and a bowl of clean water to wash with before bending down to collect the bloody bandages and hurrying away without a word to her murmur of thanks.

"Well said, Chancellor Griffin. Now, before we start, will you join me?"

\* \* \*

><p><span><strong>AN:\*\* Thank you for reading, please let me know what you think. " This story is now complete.

\*\*Reference:\*\* Translations from trigedasleng, the grounder language on "The 100" " to English.

"jesus! Whit ste bilaik!? Disha ste supposed kom heal?!" = "Jesus! What is that!? This is supposed to heal?!"

End  
file.